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S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN *B O S T O N*,

November 18, 1791;

AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

OF THE

REV. THOMAS ADAMS,

TO THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY, AND PASTORAL
CARE OF A SOCIETY OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS, IN THE
TOWN OF CAMDEN, IN SOUTH-CAROLINA.

—♦♦♦♦♦— K
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A N
O R D I N A T I O N
S E R M O N.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 8.

YEA, DOUBTLESS, AND I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS, FOR THE
EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS,
MY LORD.

THERE is no subject of so much importance to men, as religion. We cannot reflect, for a moment, on our weak dependant state, the natural presages which our rational and moral powers give us of a future existence, and the plain evidences with which we are surrounded, of the perfections and moral government of GOD, without being convinced, that it is our first and greatest concern to know what GOD would have us to do, that we may enjoy his favour : Accordingly this is a subject which has most deeply engaged the attention of thoughtful and considerate men, in all ages and countries. Many of the religions, indeed, which have most warmly interested mankind, have been little better than systems of falsehood and absurdity, dishonourary

dishonorary to GOD and hurtful to men. This, however, was not the case with the Jewish religion. The manner and circumstances of its promulgation, the nature of its laws, and the miraculous interpositions of divine Providence in its support and confirmation, plainly evinced it to be an institution of heaven, designed and adapted to guide the darkened, bewildered children of men into the paths of truth and peace, till the world should be prepared for the bringing in of a better covenant. It was a singular blessing to the nation for whom it was designed; and they would, perhaps, have been blameless in making their boast of the law, if they had done it, with humility and gratitude to GOD, and benevolence to mankind. In general, they valued it highly, and none of them more than the Apostle Paul, before he became a christian. Deeming it to be the only revelation from heaven, his zeal was instantly inflamed against whatever he thought opposite or dishonorary to it. And looking upon christianity in this light, he was one of the most violent persecutors of the disciples of JESUS. But happily for himself and for the world, he was not suffered to go on in this impious and mischievous practice; he was designed by heaven for other and nobler purposes. By the dispositions of divine Providence and grace, he was converted to the christian faith, that he might become a preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles. Henceforth his sentiments and views were entirely altered. Christianity became the grand object of his esteem and affection. Instead of placing any trust in his zeal for the law and his proficiency in the righteousness of it, which he once so highly valued, he declares, in the verse preceding my text, that he now esteems

seems them loss, or worse than nothing, in comparison of the far nobler privileges of christianity. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for CHRIST." He expresses his high esteem of christianity in still stronger terms in the text; declaring that he more highly valued his acquaintance with this religion, not only than his Jewish privileges, but than every thing else how valuable soever: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD" This was the natural and genuine effect of his thoroughly understanding, and fully believing the christian institution; the effect of his being a real christian: For such is the design, the nature and tendency of this institution, that no man can know and believe it, without having the highest esteem of it, and even preferring it to every thing else in the world. For what can be so worthy the esteem of a benevolent man, as an effectual plan for rescuing mankind from an inglorious and miserable bondage, and vindicating them into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD? Or what can be of equal value, in the opinion of a wise man, with the knowledge of the certain, and only certain method of securing the salvation of his soul with eternal glory?

ACCORDINGLY, we may reasonably suppose, that every real, sincere christian has the same sentiments concerning his religion, which the Apostle expresses in the text; and can say, with him, "I esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD." This is esteeming it only according to its worth.

SUCH a supreme regard to christianity will have a great influence upon the conduct of men; it will

will operate powerfully upon them, as it did upon the holy Apostle, who never lost sight of the great object of his affection; they will shew by their words and actions, what it is that they most highly value. They will shew this not only in their religious conduct, but in their daily conversation and intercourse with mankind, and in the common business and employments of life. It will, if I may so express it, give an evangelical cast, a divine and heavenly air to all their deportment; their whole life will bear the character and features of the wisdom that is from above: And it might be worthwhile to illustrate this matter at large for the instruction and trial of all in common, did not the solemnity before us, and the common practice on such occasions, seem to fix our attention upon some particular lines of conduct.

INSTEAD therefore of taking a general view of the influence which a just esteem of christianity will have upon human life, I shall

I. Point out, in some particulars, how it will direct and influence a christian minister, in discharging the duties of his office, And

II. How it will influence the conduct of a people towards their minister.

I. Let us consider how a real and just value of christianity may be expected to influence the christian minister, in discharging the duties of his office. And, considering that he has undertaken to teach men the nature and design of this religion, and, as an ambassador of CHRIST, to persuade them in CHRIST's stead, to be reconciled unto GOD, he will take all necessary care and pains to furnish himself for this good work, that he may perform it like a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. He will

will look upon the ministry as the business of his life, and will not entangle himself with the affairs of this world, and spend his time and strength in the occupations of it, as it is lawful and proper for other men to do. He will endeavour to acquaint himself with every branch of science, that he apprehends would tend to qualify him better for this important office. It is indeed to be supposed, that he is, when he engages in it, considerably acquainted with human literature; or he would not undertake so difficult an office: For a man must be very ignorant indeed, to think himself qualified for this business, while he is a mere novice in literary matters. But he will go on to cultivate his mind, and store it with every kind of knowledge that, he judges, may be useful to him in his ministerial labors. And this will be the effect of an acquaintance with the natural and moral perfections of GOD, which are the foundation of all religion, and with which, all true doctrines are consistent; the principles and powers of human nature; the laws and obligations of morality; the nature or essential qualities of virtue and vice; the history of mankind, their manners and customs in the times to which the scripture history relates; ecclesiastical history; natural history and philosophy; the languages in which the scriptures were originally written; a just method of reasoning, of comparing ideas, investigating truth, and detecting error.

A KNOWLEDGE of these things will oftentimes greatly assist him in understanding, explaining and illustrating the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and placing them in a just light before his hearers. It will guard him against pernicious errors, which

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enthusiasm and superstition have pretended to draw from the gospel. Conceiving justly of the moral character of GOD, he will reject with abhorrence every doctrine which represents him as cruel, capricious or partial : And having a just idea of the nature of virtue and vice, he will not believe that a corrupt and vicious heart can be properly denominated holy, on account of the holiness of another person, any more than a fool may be esteemed wise, on account of the wisdom of his neighbour ; or that a mere attention to the forms, ceremonies and external offices of religion, or a large share of speculative knowledge and faith will recommend him to the favor of the great LORD of heaven and earth, who loveth none but righteous persons : Nor will he imagine, that mankind are so irresistibly determined, by circumstances, in all their volitions and operations, as to make it impossible for them to will and act differently from what they do ; because this would be making them incapable of virtue and vice, as much so, as the wind and tides. But I did not mean to point out all the advantages that would result from the learning that was recommended above. This would lead me into a large field.

I go on to observe, that in order to qualify himself for his office, the minister should pay attention to his stile and language. He should endeavour to acquire and habituate himself to such a manner of address, as is best adapted to convey his meaning, and reach the hearts of his hearers. Nor will it be improper for him, if he has not this talent already, to take pains to acquire it. It does not surely consist with a just regard for christianity, for a minister, through carelessness, to deliver its doctrines

doctrines and laws in a low and slovenly, or in a confused and incorrect stile. He ought to speak of so noble and sublime a subject in language, and in a manner becoming its dignity and importance, that he may produce in others the same esteem of it, which he feels in himself.

BUT what is more essentially necessary to qualify him for his office, is a thorough acquaintance with the holy scriptures. In them, and no where else, is the religion which he so highly values, contained in its native excellence and purity. These, therefore, he will study with great diligence, care and impartiality. If he is able, and it is proper he should be, he will read them in their original languages; and by comparing one passage with another, and attending to the force and meaning, rather than the sound of words, and to the design and view of the writer, with a fair, unprejudiced mind, he will endeavour to find the true sense of those sacred records. As much as possible, he will lay aside all attachment to human systems, all partiality to names, councils and churches, and honestly inquire, "what saith the scriptures?" His view in studying them will be, not to furnish himself with arguments to support a favourite hypothesis, but to know the mind and will of the LORD. Calling no man master on earth, and esteeming no uninspired man or body of men infallible, he will adopt the interpretations, which others give of scripture, no farther than they appear to him to be rational and just. And whatever, after due examination, he thinks to be a doctrine of the gospel, he will embrace as such, however inconsistent it may be with the opinions and creeds of other men. It is indeed difficult to divest the mind of early prejudices,

ces, and keep it free from an undue veneration for human authority. Men of piety, learning and abilities, are justly entitled to esteem : And it is in a degree natural, at least it is common to estimate opinions by the character of those who espoused them ; to reject some, because they were held by those whom we esteem bad men ; and to embrace others, because they were held by good men. But this is not the way to arrive at truth. Bad men may profess true principles, and good men, false ones. Although we should think the learned Mr. CALVIN to have been of as cruel and unrelenting a spirit as historians represent him, from his treatment of SERVETUS, whom he caused to be put to death for heresy ; and ARMINIUS to have been as good a man, as he is represented in history ; it does not follow that the opinions of the former were all false, and those of the latter true. The truth of opinions does not at all depend upon the character of those who embrace them ; but upon the evidence which reason and scripture afford to support them. And he who has a just regard for the gospel, will be very cautious, that he does not, from a prejudice for or against the characters of men, ascribe to revelation doctrines which it does not, or reject those which it does contain. A plain declaration of GOD's word, will weigh more with him, than the opinions of all the uninspired Doctors, Saints and Councils of the church from the days of the Apostles to the present time.

NOR will his own former opinions be more sacred than those of other men. It is possible that he may, in his youth, have been taught and believed, for doctrines of religion, the commandments of men, things that have no foundation in

the gospel ; and perhaps inconsistent with some of its doctrines. He will therefore impartially examine into this matter ; and whatever he finds in his creed, inconsistent with the christian revelation, he will instantly give up, how much soever he may venerate the person by whom it was taught. He will esteem all such opinions but loss in comparison of the superior and glorious doctrines of CHRIST.

AND, as he will be thus careful that his sentiments are agreeable to scripture, so will he be, that his preaching be conformable to the same infallible rule. This will be the source from whence he will draw his doctrines, his admonitions and exhortations. Instead of making human creeds or bodies of divinity the foundation of his preaching, and ransacking scripture to find arguments to support their positions, the gospel will be his body of divinity, and the foundation of all his preaching ; of all the doctrines he advances, and of all the precepts he inculcates. From them he will instruct his people in the natural and moral perfections of GOD, the character and offices of the MEDIATOR, the nature of the divine promises and threatenings, the terms of forgiveness, the nature and extent of that holiness without which no man can see the LORD, and the whole plan of GOD for the redemption of sinners. Considering himself, as a minister of CHRIST, whose business it is to give men just ideas of his religion, he will not dare to advance any thing as a part of that religion, which he does not believe, after due examination, to be contained in the holy scriptures. ¶ The conjectures of learned men, not founded on the gospel, however ingenious, he will esteem, in a religious view, light as air, in comparison with the genuine doctrines of revelation.

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NOR will he shun to declare the whole counsel of GOD. It is possible that upon searching the scriptures, he may be convinced that some doctrines are contained in them, which his hearers have never looked upon as christian doctrines. But if he thinks them of importance, he will not fail to declare, and according to his best ability, to prove the truth of them. He will keep back nothing that would be profitable. He will neither add to, nor diminish from, the christian system, lest he should mar its beauty, and lessen its value in the opinion of others.

THIS love of religion will have the same effect upon him that it had upon the holy psalmist. He will not with indifference see men trample under foot the SON of GOD, and despise the blood of his cross. He will be "grieved when men keep not GOD's law." If he knows any of his hearers to be guilty of any sins of omission or commission, he will not fail to remonstrate against them, to point out their evil and inconsistency with the gospel (without pointing out the offenders in public) and persuade, exhort and intreat transgressors to amend. Nor will he be deterred from this, by the character of the delinquents, though they be the most powerful, wealthy and liberal of his parishoners : For though by omitting this duty, he might better please men ; and men whom it may be much for his temporal interest to please ; yet knowing that in this case, he should not be the faithful servant of CHRIST, he cannot, he dares not omit it. Nor will he fail to preach plainly and earnestly against the prevailing vices of the time and place in which he lives, whether he knows any of his hearers to be guilty of them or not.

IF his hearers entertain opinions, which, he judges to be false and dishonourary to the gospel, he will use his best endeavours to convince them of their errors, and persuade them to embrace the truth. For this purpose he will reason with them, out of the scriptures, every sabbath day ; opening and explaining those sacred oracles, and from thence proving the truth of what he delivers. It may, indeed, sometimes be best not expressly to contradict the favorite errors of his hearers. Some people cannot bear this : It will discompose their spirits, prejudice them against the speaker, and make them deaf to his reasoning. It may be better, without particularly mentioning the false opinions which he means to overthrow, for the preacher to endeavour to establish, by solid arguments, the contrary truths. If he can bring people to believe these, he may, after a while, without offence, shew them their inconsistency with their former opinions. Much caution and prudence are necessary in dealing with people who have been long in possession of false opinions, so as to bring them to reject their errors, and embrace the truth : But if the errors are important, if they are dishonourary to GOD, and likely to have a bad influence upon the heart and life, if they are “damnable heresies,” his veneration for genuine christianity will constrain the minister to oppose them explicitly, and use his best abilities to procure a belief of the contrary truths. In doing this, he will shew his hearers that he goes upon sure ground, that he has the authority of scripture for what he advances, and that that authority, and no other, demands our unlimited submission.

HE will not, however, endeavour to impose his sentiments and interpretations upon them : He will
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exhort them to search the scriptures, and judge for themselves of their sense and meaning, and whether what he delivers be agreeable to truth.

HE will not represent, as enemies to CHRIST, his brethren in office, because they do not think as he does upon every point, or will not subscribe to popular and fashionable systems. If they manifest uprightness of heart, and a proper regard for divine revelation, that will secure them from the imputation of heresy, and entitle them to his charity and favour.

As he will subscribe to no man's creed, so he will require no man to subscribe to his. He will give no countenance to that imposing spirit, which has been the chief support of Popery, split the church into parties, and butchered thousands of her best members. And therefore will not refuse to approve and recommend candidates for the ministry, because they will not subscribe to his opinions. If they give evidence that they believe the gospel of which they propose to be preachers, to be a divine revelation, he will require no other subscription. This will, in his opinion, be a better proof of their soundness in the faith, of their qualifications for the sacred office, than their subscribing to all the confessions and systems of divinity that have been composed since the days of inspiration; not excepting the wonderful creed of St. Athanasius. I know not how to reconcile the conduct of those, who set up other standards of orthodoxy, besides the holy scriptures, with that superior regard which is due to those sacred writings. For this evidently implies, that they think the scriptures deficient, and a less perfect rule of faith, than the creed they would impose. But certainly a due veneration for the gos-
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pel would suffer no human composition to come in competition with it, and exclude every other test of religious truth.

BUT to proceed,

THE preacher, penetrated with a just sense of the excellency of the gospel, will use great plainness of speech in his addresses. He will not, from an affectation of learning, or through carelessness and inattention, discourse in a manner unintelligible to his hearers, much less will he use ambiguous words and phrases with a view to disguise his real sentiments. But wishing that his hearers may conceive justly of the religion which he preaches, that they may esteem it as he does, he will endeavour to represent it in the most plain and intelligible language, aiming to be clearly understood by all who hear him.

HE will be affectionately importunate, and earnest in his preaching. When recommending a religion which he so highly esteems, he cannot be cold and indifferent. His language and his manner will shew, that his affections are captivated by his subject, and that his mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. He will not appear like an actor personating a feigned character, and uttering sentiments foreign from his heart. Speaking what he believes and feels, he will speak naturally ; and being in earnest, he will appear to be so. Whatever he advances will be delivered with energy and pathos, and with an air of sincerity which will add weight to every sentence. He will instruct, he will exhort and charge his hearers, as a father doth his children ; he will entreat and beseech them by the love of CHRIST ; he will persuade them by the terrors of the LORD, that they receive not the grace of GOD in vain.

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AGAIN : The minister, who duly values the gospel, will not fail to make his life and conversation agreeable to it. Without this, he knows that he cannot obtain the salvation which he preaches to others, nor, without this, will he be thought sincere in his profession of regard for this divine institution. For he in works denies his profession ; and actions are always and justly esteemed a more certain indication of a man's mind, than what he says. There cannot, indeed, be a greater absurdity and inconsistency of conduct, than for a man to profess an high veneration for the gospel, and at the same time live in the habitual violation of its laws.

MINISTERS are of all men, most obliged "to let their light so shine before men, that they seeing their good works, may glorify our father who is in heaven." How can he with boldness, warn men against those sins in which he allows himself? Or how exhort men to the practice of piety, justice and mercy, sobriety and temperance, if he pays no regard to these things in his own conduct? He, surely, must be past shame, who can speak in praise of an holy and righteous life, in a full assembly, when his conduct gives the lie to all he says. God will abhor, and men despise, the good be grieved, and the wicked hardened in sin, by such hypocrisy.

"PEOPLE will believe the preacher's life more than his discourse," says the Arch Bishop of Cambray. A good example has always been considered as of great importance in a religious or moral instructor. It is a saying of one of the christian fathers ; "he preaches sublimely, whose life is irreproachable." The ministers of the gospel therefore should, and if they sincerely love their religion,
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will endeavour to shine as lights in the world, in all the virtues of the christian life; at home and abroad, in all companies, and upon all occasions, to resemble their LORD; to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves, to be meek and humble, benevolent and peaceable, patient and contented, sincere, pious, and resigned to heaven. A just conception, and love of religion will, like the sight of its divine author, when we shall see him as he is, have a transforming influence, and inspire the good minister with an elevation and greatness of soul that will despise every thing mean and base; all the little arts of gaining popularity, of accomplishing sinister views, and of acquiring wealth, which are sometimes practised by the men of this world. His conduct will be all fair and open, becoming the simplicity that is in CHRIST.

WISHING to make the object of his affection appear amiable to all, he will renounce the unsocial and forbidding airs, the austerity and gloominess of superstition, and by an affable courtesy and decent sobriety, endeavour to win the affections of all, to him and his religion. It is no service, but an injury to religion, for the ministers of CHRIST, to put on sanctimonious airs, and keep at a distance from their people, as if they thought themselves too good to associate with them. The example of CHRIST teaches us a different conduct: And it is the duty of ministers, as well as of other christians, to think of, and practise those things which are lovely and of good report. Great caution, however, may be necessary for the minister, in some situations, that while he studies to "please all men, for their good to edification," he does nothing unbecoming the dignity of his office, or that
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might grieve or offend a weak brother. He will, therefore, ever consult the dictates of prudence, and not only “ exercise himself to have always a conscience void of offence towards GOD and man,” but endeavor to avoid every thing that might tend to raise prejudices against him, and lessen his usefulness. He will be circumspect in all he says, and in all he does, that, if possible, he may “ give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.”

FINALLY, that he may be able rightly to divide the word of truth, and fulfil his ministry, he will daily seek wisdom of GOD, who giveth liberally, to him that lacketh, and upbraideth not. And knowing that the success of his ministry depends upon GOD, he will devoutly pray for a divine blessing on his labours ; pray that his people may have hearing ears and understanding hearts, and “ receive, with meekness, the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls.” Nor will he fail humbly to offer his benevolent wishes to heaven, that all mankind may be blessed with the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS, and submit to his righteous government.

II. LET us now briefly consider, how a due regard to the gospel will influence a people in their conduct towards their faithful minister, And

It will induce them to esteem him highly in love for his works sake. Looking on him as a messenger of heaven, who brings glad tidings of great joy, he will share in the affection and regard which they bear to his message ; They will therefore treat him with kindness and respect. Though they should in many instances discover, that he is a man of like passions and frailties with themselves,
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which they ought to expect, yet agreeing with them in a great veneration for christianity and using his endeavours to recommend and promote it, these things will be sufficient to cover a multitude of failings, and render him amiable and respectable in their eyes. The world, says our LORD, will love its own: The same may be said of christianity, that is of the genuine professors of it; they will love their own, their brethren in CHRIST, especially those who sincerely labour to promote his interest. It is inconsistent with a due veneration for christianity to treat the faithful ministers of it with disrespect, or not to love and esteem them.

THEY will also, as much as in them lies, encourage and assist him in his work. The success of his ministry will lie near their hearts, and they will think themselves happy if they can be instrumental in promoting it.

FOR this end, they will freely grant him a decent maintenance, suitable to his station, that he may not be obliged to neglect his ministry to procure one, in some other way. It is a plain dictate of common equity, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. The nature of their office does not allow them to engage in any of those secular employments, by which other men obtain a support, and provide for their families: And the people, at whose desire they engage in this work, and to whom they minister, are, in common justice, as much obliged to give them a maintenance, as the farmer is to pay the labourer his hire, who reaps down his field, even supposing there were no contract for this purpose. But lest people, from an avaricious temper, and an insensibility of the importance of religious instruction, should neglect
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this duty, GOD has taken care particularly and repeatedly to inculcate it in his word. By the Jewish law, liberal provision was made for the ministers of religion, even a tenth of all the produce of the land. In reference to this, the Apostle says to the Corinthians; do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they that wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? and then adds, even so hath the LORD ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. And to the Galatians he says; let him, that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things. It is therefore plainly ordained in the gospel, that the ministers of CHRIST should be maintained by those to whom they minister. Nor can it be supposed, that any people, who have a just regard for religion, will fail in this duty. Such a people will cheerfully impart of their substance to one, who is engaged in a work to which they so heartily wish success, and often give him occasion to rejoice in their liberality.

THEY will stately attend his public ministrations, not forsaking the assembling themselves together on the LORD's day, in the place where the MOST HIGH commandeth the blessing, even life forever more, and where his honour dwelleth. This is plainly a christian duty, required of all in common, of the rich and poor, of the high and low, of the wise and simple. Nor can it be supposed that it will be esteemed a burden by any who love religion. It will be far from being disagreeable even to those, if such there should be, who are so well informed as to stand in no need of instruction, to hear the doctrines and duties of the gospel inculcated, and have

have their pure minds stired up, by way of remembrance. And, though they will be influenced not merely or chiefly by a regard to the person of their minister, but by a principle of love and obedience to GOD; yet an unnecessary and customary neglect of public worship, must be looked upon as implying some disrespect of the preacher, as well as of religion; it will be so considered and felt by him; and when it is general among the people of his charge, will greatly tend to dishearten and discourage him in his work. The public services of the LORD'S day, cost the faithful minister much labour and pains, and if they are often neglected by his people, this cannot fail to sink his spirits and abate his zeal.

A JUST regard for the gospel will make people attentive to what the preacher says; they will hear, as for their lives. Persons may, and no doubt often do, attend public worship without any care to understand what they hear. Their thoughts are employed upon their worldly affairs, their amusements, or upon the dress and appearance of the assembly; or, composing themselves to sleep, they think not at all. But such conduct is surely inconsistent with a due regard to religion, as well as an affront to the preacher and the rest of the assembly. Again,

A PROPER esteem of christianity will dispose people to hear with due caution, that they are not led aside from the simplicity that is in CHRIST. Knowing their minister to be fallible and liable to mistakes, they will not receive what he says without due examination, without searching the scriptures to see whether it be true. To the law and to the testimony they will bring what he offers, and if he speaks not according to them, they will
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not receive it as the word of GOD. Whatever affection they may have for him, and however highly they may think of his abilities and integrity, their superior regard for the gospel will make that, and not his opinion, the rule of their faith.

THEY will, however, hear him with meekness and candour, and a teachable temper, not with a captious, carping, obstinate disposition. They will not be offended with him for telling them their faults, and exposing their errors; nor refuse to reform when warned from the word of GOD, to turn from their wickedness. They will not watch for mistakes and inaccuracies in him, or hastily condemn every thing he says, that does not exactly suit their taste, or correspond with their former sentiments. They will put the most favorable construction upon his declarations, keep their minds open to conviction, calmly and impartially attend to his arguments, and readily embrace his sentiments, if they appear to be well supported by scripture, however contrary to their old opinions.

THE lovers of religion will give their minister the satisfaction of seeing the success of his labors among them. They will manifest their regard to him and to the gospel, by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless. "I have no greater joy," says the Apostle John, "than to hear that my children walk in the truth." And every faithful minister of the gospel will esteem it his greatest felicity to see the people of his charge walking thus. This will give him grounds to hope, that when he comes to give an account of his ministry to the great LORD and JUDGE of all, he may do it with joy, and not with grief.

FINALLY,

FINALLY, when people have a due regard for religion, they will not forget to pray for their minister, and for the success of his labors. Pray for us, says Paul to the Thessalonians, that the word of the LORD may have free course, and be glorified. And if the inspired Apostles needed the prayers of GOD's people for the success of their labors, the ordinary ministers of the gospel, do not surely need them less. Nor can it be supposed, that a people, duly sensible of the importance of the gospel revelation, will omit daily to supplicate the FATHER of mercies to prosper the labors of their minister, when they consider, that however faithful and skilful he may be in performing them, their success depends ultimately upon GOD. Though Paul may plant, and Apollos water, it is GOD who giveth the increase.

WHAT has been said may lead ministers and people to review their past conduct towards each other, and consider how they have discharged their respective duties, and put them upon rectifying whatever has been amiss. But instead of enlarging upon this thought, I must leave it, my brethren, to your own reflections, and turn myself to the person at whose desire I stand in this place.

IT will be no compliment to you, my brother, to suppose that you can say, with the holy Apostle in the text, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD." You know too well the nature of religion, to think that any other subject can be of equal importance to mankind; and you would not surely undertake to be a minister of the gospel, if you did not believe it to be a revelation from heaven, a divine institution designed by GOD for the salva-

tion of sinners. To engage in this difficult and self-denying office, without such a faith, must argue not only a total want of integrity of heart, but a great deficiency in that worldly wisdom which common sense dictates. But I know, that thou believest the scriptures. And, with this faith, you cannot be insensible that you are under the highest obligations to be faithful in discharging the duties of your office. These are great, numerous and arduous. They will require the exertion of all your abilities; the employment of all your time. Those who are acquainted with you, and know in what manner you have acquitted yourself in the pulpit, have the pleasing hope that you will be a good minister of JESUS CHRIST. GOD, who is putting you into the ministry, has, we trust, accounted you faithful, and qualified you, by his grace, to fulfil it. Neglect not the gift that is in thee; but covet earnestly more and better. The science of christian divinity, is at once the most noble and excellent, and the most deep and extensive. It affords ample scope for the greatest genius, and is a subject that the human mind can never exhaust. It is what kings and prophets contemplated with rapture, though they understood it but imperfectly, and even angels desire to look into. The more it is studied, the more it captivates and engages the heart by its heavenly beauties. Let this divine science be the subject of your daily attention; meditate upon it, give thyself wholly to it. Be more afraid of neglecting or carelessly performing the duties of your office, than of wearying the flesh by much study. You ought to bid adieu to a life of indolence and ease. As a watchman, you must be always vigilant; as a steward of the mysteries

mysteries of GOD, you must acquaint yourself with those mysteries. If, like Apollos, you would be an eloquent man, like him, you must be mighty in the scriptures; the best model of ministerial eloquence. But,

CONTENT not yourself, my brother, with a mere speculative knowledge, and a barren faith, Bow your heart to the authority, and regulate your life and temper, by the commands of the gospel, that in preaching to others the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, you may speak what you know, and testify what you feel; lest, after having preached to others, you yourself should be a cast-away.

You are going to a place where you can have but little assistance from the advice and example of other ministers. And it will require all your wisdom and prudence to point out to you, in many cases, what is both lawful and expedient: How to order your deportment towards the various kinds of people with whom you may be concerned; how far you ought to join with the gay and fashionable world in their amusements, in order to conciliate their affections, and when you ought to separate yourself from them; how far you may condescend, without degrading your character, and when you should claim the authority of your office. It is happy for religion, and the ministers of it, in New-England, that they cannot sustain the office, if their lives are openly immoral. This must be a powerful motive with them, if they had no other, to keep themselves irreproachable before men. In some parts of this continent, it is said to be otherwise; and that a minister may retain his office, though of very loose morals. Where
this

this is the case, it would not be strange if some of that profession should indulge themselves, in liberties inconsistent with christian sobriety. How people in the part to which you are going, think upon this subject, I know not. But I hope and believe, that you, Sir, studying to shew yourself approved unto GOD, will allow yourself in no indulgence unbecoming the gospel, even though you might do it, without injuring your ministerial character, and must be singular in refraining. Your brethren here are peculiarly interested in this matter. As you have been educated, and for some time a preacher among us, ~~and have now our people of obligation~~ your conduct may be considered as a specimen of the manners of the ministers with whom you have been conversant. ~~I would~~ *And* ~~further observe, that~~ as you will be, at present, the only minister ~~of~~ ~~in that~~ in that part of the country, the example of your deportment may have a great influence upon other ministers, who may settle in your neighbourhood, and from you, the people there may form their idea of a christian minister. For our sake, then, and from a regard to the dignity and usefulness of the gospel ministry, we beseech you to keep yourself unspotted from the world, even though some should think it strange, that you run not with them to riotous excess. Imitating the unfeigned faith, the exemplary piety and virtue which dwelt in your good father, now at rest, and which, I trust, you have seen in other ministers also, let your people, by your holy and blameless life, see that a minister of CHRIST is a respectable and useful character, a character against which no evil thing can be justly said. I mention these things, not from a suspicion of your want of faith and integrity,

ty, but from an apprehension, that you may be exposed to peculiar temptations ; and that being thus warned in love, you may, putting on the whole armor of GOD, stand and overcome them ; and, by your good conversation in CHRIST JESUS, obtain not only for yourself, but for us also, a good report among all who may know you.

THAT you may do thus, ever remembering your absolute dependence upon GOD, pray, that his grace may be sufficient for you. And,

THINK often of the importance of your office, and of the honor and happiness you will acquire by a faithful discharge of it. You will be a worker together with GOD, and with his SON, in the cause of virtue and happiness ; you may be the means of saving many for whom CHRIST died. He that winneth souls, is wise ; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

THINK, on the other hand, of the infamy, shame and misery you will incur, if you are unfaithful in your office, and dissolute in your life ; you will be the scorn of men, and the execration of the ALMIGHTY ; you will dishonour and injure the cause of religion, while you pretend to be its friend ; and you will be utterly inexcusable, when GOD shall call you to give an account of your stewardship.

“ SON of man, saith the LORD to the prophet Ezekiel, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me : When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand : Yet if thou warn the wicked,
and

and he turn not from his wickedness, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

HOWEVER faithful you may be, it is possible that your ministry may be unsuccessful, and you may have reason to complain, with the prophet of old, who hath believed our report? but let this be your consolation; though Israel be not gathered, yet every faithful pastor will be glorious in the eyes of the LORD.

WE cannot indeed but hope from the laudable disposition, which the people of *Camden* have shewn, in so earnestly inviting you to be their gospel minister, that they will not suffer you to labour among them in vain, and spend your strength for nought; that they will attend your ministrations with diligence, receive with all readiness of mind the messages of GOD's grace in the gospel, and be doers as well as hearers of his word: Nor can we help entertaining the pleasing expectation, that other people around you, beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in CHRIST, will be convinced of the utility and importance of the gospel ministry, and pray the LORD of the harvest to send forth other labourers, into "that part of his harvest," where there are at present so few.

To conclude:

Go, my dear brother, whither the LORD hath called thee to preach the gospel, with the fulness of its blessings. May heaven direct, and assist you. May your hands be made strong by the hands of the mighty GOD of Jacob. And, having, as a faithful servant of the MOST HIGH, shewn unto men the way of salvation, may you have many for your joy, and crown of rejoicing in the day of the LORD. This is our hearts desire and prayer to GOD, to which, I doubt not, this whole assembly will say,

A M E N.

THE

C H A R G E,

BY THE REV. MR. JACKSON,

of BROOKLYN.

DEAR SIR,

YOU being called by our christian brethren at *Camden*, in South Carolina, to the work of the ministry among them, and having now by prayer, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, been separated to that service : We, the ministers of CHRIST, by authority from him, declare you to be duly vested with all the authority, powers and privileges of a gospel Minister, and we now solemnly charge you before GOD and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the holy angels, who are doubtless witnesses of this solemnity ;—Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the LORD to fulfil it. Take heed to yourself and to all the flock, of which the HOLY GHOST maketh you an Overseer, or Bishop.

THE office of a gospel Bishop includes, inspection, instruction, government and ordination. You will therefore visit your flock on all proper occasions, that you may know their wants and circumstances, and rightly divide the word of truth.

WARN the wicked that he turn from his wickedness. Inform the ignorant. Rebuke the obstinate. Resolve the doubting, and comfort the feeble minded.

INITIATE and establish your hearers in the principles of the christian religion, and lead them
into

into the understanding and practice of the duties contained in it. Preach the word. Do not entertain your hearers with empty harangues and perverse disputings; but inculcate gospel truths and gospel duties; and let your discourses be close and searching, evangelical and instructive, warm and persuasive.

You must not only be a teacher, but a defender of the christian faith to the convincing of gainsayers. You are set for the defence of the gospel. Behave yourself in the house of GOD as a pillar of truth. You are also to rule and govern the flock.

ADMINISTER the sacraments of the New Testament unto the qualified subjects, according to the order prescribed in GOD's word, ever distinguishing between the precious and the vile, remembering that holiness becomes GOD's house.

FAITHFULLY exercise the discipline of CHRIST's church. Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear. Observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

As you have the power of investing others with the same office you sustain yourself, we caution you in the words of the Apostle—Lay hands suddenly on no man. Give no encouragement to illiterate or vicious men, but commit the gospel to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Be not partaker of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure.

WHEN you consider the trials, the difficulties and temptations before you, conscious of your own weakness, you may be ready to cry out, Who is sufficient for these things; then remember the promise, "Lo I am with you." And let

let that animate and encourage you. Frequently reflect that you watch for souls as one that must give an account, and that if any, through your negligence, die in his iniquity, the blood of that soul will be required at your hand. We wish you much of the presence of that same JESUS, whom we hope you will preach, that you may be a distinguished instrument of advancing his honour, and the salvation of souls ; and that after having turned many to righteousness, you may shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever.

THE grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST be with your spirit,

A M E N.



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THE

T H E

Right Hand of Fellowship,

BY THE REV. MR. P O R T E R,

of ROXBURY.

VERY different are the modes, as well as various and contradictory the opinions, which prevail in the christian world. But amidst all this variety and contradiction, the truly pious and good man, who placeth his religion, not so much in forms and creeds as in his temper and practice, rejoices in this one indubitable and everlasting truth, **THAT GOD IS LOVE ; AND HE THAT DWELLETH IN LOVE DWELLETH IN GOD, AND GOD IN HIM.** May it be engraven on all our hearts, and known by our joyful experience.

LOVE to GOD and love to man, are the sum and substance of our holy religion. On these two points hang all the law and the prophets. Without these, christianity is but an empty name, and all its professors together are become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. It is love that makes a christian. It is love that makes us like GOD. And it is this alone that can inspire our hearts with present peace, and qualify us for the joys of heaven.

THIS excellent grace, as it constitutes the highest happiness of the christian, so it gives the greatest beauty and lustre to his character. Never do the
professed

professed disciples of our blessed MASTER appear in a more consistent, amiable, heavenly, godlike view ; or recommend more effectually their religion to the world, than when this divine principle reigns in their bosoms, and habitually influences all their words and actions.

A SPIRIT of mutual love, as well as of universal charity, is especially requisite, and appears with peculiar grace, in the ministers of the gospel, who are brethren by office ; sent with the messages of love, and appointed for examples to the flock. As a fit expression of the brotherly affection that they feel ; and which it becomes them, at all times, to cherish and improve, it hath been usual, on such occasions as the present, to observe the very significant and apostolick ceremony of giving to the person inducted into the ministerial office, the *Right Hand of Fellowship*.

THE ecclesiastical Council, convened on this occasion, have appointed me to perform this part of the present solemnity. From sentiments of duty and respect, I am led to yield to their appointment. At the same time, however, I am free to acknowledge, that the part assigned me, is far from being an unwelcome task. It is a duty that accords with my inclination, and for which, I hope, I am not altogether unqualified ; since a sincere and affectionate heart is the only qualification required.

WITH unfeigned pleasure, DEAR SIR, I now give you the right hand ; by which ceremony we would express, not only our affection to your person, and esteem for your character ; but also our satisfaction in you, as a fellow labourer in the gospel of CHRIST. By this interchange of hands we mutually pledge our friendship, and readiness to
communicate

communicate as occasion may require, in all public acts of christian fellowship, as well as in the more private offices of love.

A consideration of the distant part of the vineyard of our LORD, in which the providence of GOD, who appointeth to the children of men the bounds of their habitations, and the scenes of their labours, is about to employ you, occasions us regret. But though your residence with us might be more agreeable to our personal feelings; yet as your absence is more needful for others, and may afford an opportunity for your greater usefulness in the world, it becomes us to acquiesce in a separation. Yea, we approve of your design, and from a regard to the spiritual advantage of our distant brethren, and to the interest of the common salvation, we rejoice in your undertaking.

THE Elders and Messengers of the churches here assembled, send greetings to the churches; and to all the brethren after the common faith, in the parts whither thou goest; especially unto them who labour in the word and doctrine. May the blessing of GOD descend, and rest upon them. Although we are unknown to each other by face, may we be united in the sacred bonds of charity; may we know each other's affairs, and be fellow helpers to each other's joy. Great would be our satisfaction to hear that the churches of CHRIST were multiplied among them; that elders, or christian ministers, were ordained in all their religious societies and villages; and that of their *own sons*, who would naturally care for their state, a sufficient number were educated, inclined, and thoroughly furnished to the work of the gospel ministry.

ON

ON our part, we trust there is not wanting a disposition for such intercourse and communications as may tend to our mutual furtherance in christian knowledge, order, love and comfort ; or to unite in any proper measures for extending the knowledge, and advancing the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; both theirs and ours.

GREET the brethren who are at *Camden*, in our name. Thus shalt thou say unto them, "Peace be unto you, and grace from GOD the FATHER, and from the LORD JESUS CHRIST." Acquaint them, that we rejoice and give thanks unto GOD on their behalf, since the day we heard of their earnest desire and laudable efforts to obtain a christian minister, who might stately preach among them the gospel of CHRIST, and show unto them the way of salvation : And that we fail not to make mention of them in our prayers to the GOD of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS, beseeching HIM, that after their being, of late, scattered abroad, and having suffered a while, he would now make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them ; and through the word of his grace, build them up to an inheritance among all them who are sanctified.

WE hope and trust, Dear Brother, that thou wilt be unto them a faithful minister. So conduct thyself as that we may not be ashamed of this our confidence. Already, indeed, hast thou received the solemn Charge from one, who being much bold in CHRIST JESUS, hath *enjoined* thee that which is convenient : Nevertheless, for *love's* sake I will *beseech* thee. Yea, Brother, let us have joy of thee in the LORD ; refresh our bowels in the LORD.

CORDIALLY

CORDIALLY do we wish thee an agreeable journey by the will of GOD ; and that thou mayest prosper and be in health ; especially that thy soul may prosper. May GOD ALMIGHTY bless thee. May the FATHER of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, furnish thee more and more for the arduous and important work in which thou art engaged. May thy labours be accepted of the saints, and thy life honoured with usefulness ; may wisdom and prudence, fidelity and zeal, mark thy character, and a crown of eternal glory shall be thy reward.



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